

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the PARISH-CHURCH of

St. *J O H N*'s, *H A C K N E Y*,

On *T U E S D A Y*, APRIL 25, 1749,

Being the Day appointed for

A publick Thanksgiving for the P E A C E.

By *R O B E R T W R I G H T*, D.D. *K*

R E C T O R of *Hackney*, and C H A P L A I N to his Royal Highness
the Prince of *Wales*.

Publisch'd at the Request of the Congregation.

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T O T H E
W O R T H Y P A R I S H I O N E R S
O F

St. *J O H N*'s, H A C K N E Y,

This Plain D I S C O U R S E

Now published at their earnest Request,
Though in very Truth not prepared with any
such View or Expectation,

In grateful Acknowledgment of their many
Favours, is humbly inscribed

By their Faithful Servant,

R. W R I G H T.

W. O. L. T. H. Y. L. A. R. I. S. H. I. O. N. E. R. S.

BY J. O. M. A. S. H. A. C. K. E. R. S.

THE L. A. I. S. C. O. U. R. S. E.

Now published at their annual Report.

Though it is not prepared with any
view to a new or expanded

in general Acknowledgment of their many
services, is hereby intended

By the Fairly known

R. W. R. H. E. T.

JOHN v.†14. *Latter Part.*

—— *Behold Thou art made whole, Sin no more, lest a worse Thing come unto Thee.*

TH E S E Words are spoken by our blessed LORD, to a poor Man whom He had cured by a Miracle — by only Speaking the Word, of an Infirmary which he had laboured under for no less than eight and thirty Years. Such a sudden and unexpected Cure, when in all Likelyhood he thought his Case desperate, did, we may suppose, so possess and hurry his Spirits, that he had not Power at that Time to mind or observe, who it was that he was obliged to for it; for when he was questioned about it by the Jews, we read in the Verse before the Text, that he wist not who he was, nor could he give them any Account of his Person.

However, he did not so far forget Himself upon the whole, as not to render his publick Thanks to Almighty God for it; for the next News we hear of him, is his being in the Temple; and it is natural to suppose — it would be want of Charity to think otherwise — that his coming thither was upon *That* pious Account: If it had not, our SAVIOUR who met him there would in the first Place have reminded him of *That* Duty; for He was no less mindful of instructing and doing Good to the Souls of Men, than of healing their bodily Infirmities: He expected, that Those upon whom He wrought Cures

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should of their own Accord give Glory to GOD; and when, in the Instance of the ten Lepers whom He had cleansed *, He took such Notice of the single One who had thus behaved as he ought, it was not so much to commend him for doing, what the lowest Sense of Gratitude would have obliged him to, as to blame the others for being so shamefully inconsiderate and unthankful.

Be it admitted then, that our Blessed LORD found This poor Man in the Temple thus piously imployed in praising and blessing GOD for the great Mercy which he had received at his Hands; it will justify His taking further Notice of him, and giving him that good and seasonable Advice in the Text respecting his future Behaviour, since he seemed so worthy of it: *Behold, says He, Thou art made whole, Sin no more lest a worse Thing come unto Thee.*

His Caution conveys Instruction with it, to us at least, if not to the Person to whom He gave it; for it gives us to understand, that the Infirmary under which he had lain for so many Years, was a Punishment inflicted upon him for his Sins: It is plainly implied that he had sinned, and therefore was *That* Affliction come upon him; and now that he is made whole, He is bid beware of sinning any more, lest a worse Affliction should befall him.

It may be, that the Man himself was not aware of *This*; for Sinners are not always such just Censurers of

* Luke xvii. 18 v.

their own Conduct, as to impute the Afflictions which happen to them to the avenging Hand of Providence: However, it is what *We* could not have known, ——— hardly would it have been allowable even to let our Gueſſes lead us to it ——— if our SAVIOUR had not in this Manner ſpecified it to us; for, tho' it is undoubtedly true, that ſome Afflictions are ſent upon Mankind judicially, for the Punishment of their Sins, yet *this* is far from being the Caſe of every Affliction that befalls us: They may ſerve for other prudential Ends, beſides Correction; They may be deſigned for the Trial and Exerciſe of Virtue, and to exhibit to the World an illuſtrious Example of Patience and Reſignation to the divine Will: Nay, it is enough to juſtify them, if they only afford an Opportunity of diſplaying the Power of Almighty GOD in their ſpeedy and miraculous Removal: *This* we know was the Caſe of the Man who was born blind and received his Sight from our LORD's Hand. The Jews indeed thought that ſuch a Calamity *muſt* be judicial, and were fooliſh enough to aſk, whether it were for the Man's *own* Sins, or the Sins of his *Parents* that he was born ſo; but our SAVIOUR aſſures them, that it was not for *any* Sin, and that it was only *that the Power of God might be manifested in him* †.

Wherefore, it is neither a ſafe nor a Charitable Way of arguing, from the Afflictions which happen to particular Perſons, that they are the judicial Conſequences of

† *John ix. 3 v.*

their Sins: Sometimes indeed They are so, and oftener perhaps than Men are willing to think, when it happens to be their own particular Case; that it was so however in the Instance before us, is put out of all Question by our SAVIOUR's own Authority; and This will be warrant enough for us to say, that Afflictions and Calamities befalling particular Persons, are *sometimes* Judgments upon them, though we are not at Liberty to determine *when* They are so, save only in *those* which every Man may judge of and apply to himself.

But now, what is only *sometimes* true concerning Afflictions being sent upon particular Persons, is always and without Exception *so*, when applied to Nations and Communities: And the Reason is plain and obvious; for, there is no Necessity, either for the Sake of Justice, or securing the Ends of Government, that Sinners should be punished in this Life for their Sins, since there is another Life in Reserve, when They will be called to a strict and severe Account: Nay, were not the general Punishment of Sin suspended or delayed till then, we should have wanted those Proofs of the Mercy, Forbearance, and Long-suffering of God, which Now shine forth with so amiable a Lustre in the divine Character. Whereas Nations and Kingdoms, if they are to be at all punished for their Sins — and that they should at one Time or other, Justice and good Government requires — it must be in This Life; because, as Nations, They do not subsist in another: And though God does
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exercise his Patience and Long-suffering towards *These*, as well as to particular Persons, yet hath He set Bounds and Limits to it; for when the Measure of their Iniquities is full, he does not fail to send forth his Judgments upon Them: Therefore, whenever any sore Calamity befalls a Nation, we cannot err in ascribing it to the Sins of *That* Nation, and to the Wrath of God's Vengeance poured out upon it.

This Observation, which I have been naturally led into, from the Circumstances of the Poor Man whom our LORD healed of his Infirmary, will help me to apply the Caution given him in the Text, to the Solemnity of the Day, and to our Share and Concern in it.

We, as a Nation, have in one Respect, somewhat resembled this poor Man; we have been many Years involved in a bloody and expensive War ——— a War that threatened us with Ruin and Desolation ——— with the Loss, not only of our Trade and Commerce, but, which is infinitely more valuable, of our Liberty and Religion; for the Enemies we had to deal with, would gladly have made a Prey of both. This has been our Infirmary and Affliction, and till lately, we almost despaired of seeing a happy End put to it: So Melancholy was our Prospect! And that This Affliction was a divine Judgment upon us for our National Sins, we can no more doubt of, for the Reasons already hinted at, than the poor Man could doubt, that his Infirmary was a Judgment upon him for his Sins, after our LORD had intimated so much to him in the Text.

Let

Let the Event of any War be what it will — be it carried on with as great Successes as our most sanguine Hopes could ever presage, it is still a Judgment of God upon the People that are engaged in it. The Generals indeed on either Side may gather Laurels in the Field — They may return Home in Triumph, and very deservedly receive the Honours that are due to their Courage and Conduct: But let it be remembered what large Sacrifices they make to Victory, and how many of their own People fall the unhappy Victims of it. What good KING who is the Father of his Country, would not regret the Loss of so many faithful Subjects who have laid down their Lives for his Sake? What Community would not sensibly feel the Want of so many useful Members of Society? And then for Individuals — it would be endless to recount the Occasions of their private Grievs; The Father, the Husband, the Friend lost — would involve Multitudes of whole Families in the utmost Distress.

These are the unavoidable Calamities of War even when it is most successful, not to mention the Burthen of it in other Respects, of which no one can hope to be exempted from feeling his Share; and I should not have touch'd upon so tender and interesting a Subject, at a Time of such general Joy, were it not to heighten That Joy, by making us sensible of the Greatness of our Deliverance, and to whom we are indebted for it. If a War, under the most favourable Circumstances is a
Judgment

Judgment of GOD upon a People or Nation, *then*, the Removal of That Judgment is a great Mercy for which surely it behoves us to be thankful. Peace is to be reckoned among the choicest of his Blessings, as War is the heaviest of all his Judgments; and what much enhances the Blessing to us at *This Time*, and must make us the more sensible that it is derived from His Goodness, are the Difficulties which stood in the Way of it, and which, to the best of human Skill and Policy, might well seem to be altogether unfurmountable. There were so many Powers confederated in it on either Side, and their separate Interests were so nearly bordering upon each other, were so blended and intermix'd, that to compose and adjust them to the Content and Good-liking of every One, especially when Ambition and the Lust of Power had so fair a Scope to pursue their Ends, and keep up the Contention, we may I conceive be justly excused in saying that it was not the Work of Man, and that it could only be brought to pass by HIM, who alone is able to *refrain the Spirit of Princes, and who is wonderful among the Kings of the Earth* †.

After so signal a Blessing conferred upon this Nation, and I may add the Nations around us — for it is no less a Blessing to them — Our Enemies, Let me say it, had at least no less Reason to be desirous of Peace than ourselves — I say, after we have received so great a Mercy from HEAVEN, it was but meet and our bounden Duty,

† *Psalms lxxvi. 12 v.*

that

that we should assemble ourselves together in the House of God, There to celebrate his Praises in the Voice of Joy and Thanksgiving ——— to praise the LORD for his Goodness and declare the Wonders that HE has done for us. The poor Man we find, after he was cured of his Infirmary, resorted to the Temple for This very Purpose, that he might give Glory to God ; and it is for the same Purpose, that the whole Nation are at This Time, as we may well presume, lifting up their Hearts in their publick Assemblies of Worship, and testifying at once their Gratitude as well as Joy before Almighty God for the good Work He has wrought for us ——— for his making War to cease in the Kingdoms around us, and restoring to us the Blessings of Peace.

Thus far then, the two Cases bear some Resemblance to each other, and I am willing You should still keep them together in your Eye, for the Sake of the Caution in the Text: *Behold*, ——— says the Blessed JESUS to the thankful poor Creature whose Health he had restored ——— *Behold Thou art made whole, Sin no more, lest a worse Thing come unto Thee.* This is what I would have us apply to ourselves; let it be as if we now heard a Voice from HEAVEN speaking to us and saying, Behold Ye are made whole, Your Breaches are healed, Ye have Peace within Your Walls and about Your Borders, Sin no more, lest a worse Thing come upon You. This will at once remind us of the Occasion whereof we rejoice, and at the same Time warn us of our future Behaviour, that

it be not such as may again provoke the divine Majesty to visit us in Judgment.

I. First I say, it will remind us of the Occasion whereof we rejoice; it is for Peace restored, and all the valuable Blessings that accompany it. As great a Blessing as Peace is in itself, Yet like other Blessings of HEAVEN, while We enjoy them without Interruption, We are apt to overlook the Hand of Providence that shours them down upon us; but if *These* are for a while withheld from us, and we have suffered under the Want of Them, *Then* it is that We learn to know their Value, and to be thankful for them. Such is the Occasion of our present Joy — such the Motives of our Gratitude to HEAVEN — This is Now the Subject of our Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving to the most HIGH, for his undeserved as well as unexpected Mercy. It is the LORD that reigneth, *therefore the NATIONS rejoice, Yea the Multitude of the Isles are glad thereof* ||. But then

II. 2dly, it warns us at the same Time, of our future Behaviour, that it be not such, as may again provoke the divine Majesty to visit us in Judgment.

The Judgments of God, such of them I mean as are designed for Correction, *must* in the very Nature of them be ever proportioned to the Offences they are intended to amend: When God visits a Nation, — as He often does, with a merciful View of bringing Them to a Sense

of their evil Doings, and to reclaim and reform Them, — If They are still incorrigible, Reason requires that He should use sharper Methods with Them; if He has visited their Offences with Rods, and their Sins with Scourges, and These make no Impression upon Them, nor produce any good Effect, *Then*, He will proceed to *chastise Them with Scorpions* *; for it is but right and fitting that the Strength of the Medicine should be suited to the Obstinacy and Malignancy of the Distemper, and it is what may reasonably be expected from Him as a wise and prudent Ruler of the Universe; and it is This Consideration which will lead us to apply the Warning in the Text to ourselves, and to profit by it — Sin no more, lest a heavier Judgment befalls us than That which We are Now happily delivered from. We may say as the Prophet *Ezra* did upon a like Occasion; *After all that has come upon us for our Evil Deeds, seeing that our God hath punished us less than our Iniquities have deserved, and hath given us such a Deliverance; should we again break his Commandments, would He not be angry with us till He had consumed us, so that there should be no Remnant nor escaping* †?

What Those Sins are for which God hath visited us with *This* Judgment, and which must be avoided if we would escape a worse, it will be no difficult Matter to point out. As it was a National Judgment, it must

* 1 Kings xii. 14 v.

† Ezra ix. 13, 14 v.

have

have been for National Sins, I mean such as are epidemical and spread like a Distemper, till the Generality of People are infected with it: And among *These*, we have to reckon, to our great Shame and Reproach, Infidelity, Profaneness, a Contempt of God and his Religion, Loss of publick Virtue and publick Spirit, an effeminate Luxury, an immoderate Love of Pleasure, Intemperance, Lewdness and Riot, and — to say all in a Word, a most woful Abuse of Liberty: — *That* Darling Privilege of our Country, how scandalously has it been abused, and in Matters the most essential to the Order and Well-being of Society? What indecent Liberties have been sometimes taken, with Those who bear Rule over us, and have upon That Account a just Claim to be honour'd by us from the Word of God? How light a Matter has it been accounted, to speak Evil of Dignities, — to slander and ridicule Them, even when their best Endeavours have been employ'd for the publick Good?

If This must pass only for jesting — the wanton Over-flowings of their Tongues and their Pens, yet surely it is *such jesting as is not convenient*; Nay, let me say, it must, from a natural Tendency, have a pernicious Influence upon the Well-being of any Community. How can we tell, but it might be owing to This very Cause, that our Enemies forced us into a War with them? Was it not natural for them to conclude, from the factious Writings and Language of some Malevolent

Spirits amongst us, too greedily fought after and listned to by Multitudes, and suffered to pass with Impunity from a Lenity which no other Government but ours either *could* or *would* admit of— Was it not natural, I say, for them to conclude that there was an universal Defection from all Principles of Loyalty, and consequently, that We should become an easy Prey to them? It is true the Event has happily proved that they were mistaken in their Calculations, and that the People of this Nation, weak as they sometimes are to Quarrel with their Constitution and Government upon groundless Surmises, Yet when it comes to a Trial, They like it too well to exchange it for any other; But then, the great Mischiefs which have attended the Experiment, are to be placed, as it should seem, to the Account of That Abuse of Liberty which I have mentioned.

Against This therefore let us be upon our Guard, lest if we offend any more in like Sort a worse Judgment comes upon us, than *That* which we are delivered from: Let us shew forth an undissembled Loyalty to our gracious Sovereign King GEORGE; it is what Gratitude would oblige us to, were there nothing more in it, for the Mildness of his Government, and the tender Regard he has ever shewn for his People's Liberties, notwithstanding their wanton Abuse of them; and for his Sake, as well as for preserving the Order and Peace of Society, let us give due Honour to all those who are set in Au-
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htority under him : And may *They be counted worthy of double Honour* by watching over the Publick Welfare — by recovering the Reins of Civil Discipline and holding them with a stricter Hand — by seeing the Laws duly put in Execution against all Manner of Wickedness and Immorality, without Fear or Favour, without any Respect of Persons : and let us endeavour, every one by his own Example, to revive That Spirit of Piety and true Religion which is well nigh lost amongst us ; — That Love of Virtue which for a long Time has been at so low an Ebb, and to the decline of which, all our National Failings may justly be imputed : Let us learn to be better Christians, that so we may be better Men, better Neighbours, better Subjects : Let us thoroughly purge out the old Leaven of Party Rage and Division, and cultivate the Arts of Peace at Home, since it has pleased God to bless us with it abroad : Let us be more pure, more sober, more temperate, and less devoted to Pleasure than we have been in Time past, Then, the Love of God which has been shewn in correcting us with his Judgment, will have gained its End and wrought a good Work in us ; and the Joy which we feel upon this Day at the Removal of it, will be well grounded and long continue with us ; it will rise from Earth to HEAVEN, and diffuse itself among the Angels of God ; and if they are so glad at the Conversion of one Sinner, how much more will they rejoice at a whole Nation's being reclaimed and reformed ? That

That the Expressions of our Joy upon this Day, will be such as shall become the Importance of the Occasion, We have no Reason to doubt; there is one Instance of it however which I should be sorry to have overlooked, and therefore will beg Leave to remind you of it.

It is not perhaps usual upon these Occasions to plead for Charity to the Poor, tho' I confess I see no Reason why it should not; rather I should think, that no Time could be so proper for it as This: For, when our Minds are at Ease and in good Humour, and our Hearts open to Joy, then are our Hands most likely to be open to This sort of Bounty. This Way of doing Good by distributing to our Brethren that are in Necessity, is a Duty at all Times incumbent upon us, and is indeed *That* Sacrifice with which God is best pleased; and our Obligations to the Duty arise in Proportion to their Wants, which are always pressing enough to excite our Pity and Compassion. Besides, at such a Time of Joy, who would not wish that it should be universal, and that every Body should partake of it from the highest to the lowest; but *This*, how can many poor Wretches amongst us do, who it may be are pining with Hunger and Want, and have hardly a Rag to cover their Nakedness? *This* Obstacle then we have it in our Power to remove; we may thus make the Hearts of the Aged and Decrepid, of the Fatherless and the Widow sing for Joy! I will not reckon it an Expence to You, for what

is thus given in Charity deserves a better Name ; but let me say How well it will look at the Foot of those Expences which You have already been at for celebrating this happy Event, to find there — So much given in Charity to the Poor ; and may He who is the Father of the Poor and Needy reward it into your Bosoms, and may the GOD of Peace who has so seasonably given us the Blessing of Peace, perpetuate that invaluable Blessing to us and our latest Posterity for his Mercies Sake in CHRIST JESUS our LORD, *to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be ascribed as is most due All Honour and Glory henceforth and for evermore. Amen.*

F I N I S.

it is placed in the hands of a better man; but he
will not look at the fact of this
which you have already been at for
the happy event, to find that — so much given in
the hands of the poor; and may he who is the father of
the poor and needy stand in into your hands, and
may the God of Peace who has so nobly given to the
Blessing of Peace, perpetuate that noble Blessing to
us and our last posterity for his Mercies sake in
Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom with the Father and
the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory
and God bless you.



F I W I S

